

January 27, 2019
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 1:1-4, & 4:14-21

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Background:

In the first verses of Luke's gospel he acknowledges that others' gospels have been written; he goes on to explain what he intends to accomplish by writing this gospel. He is going to write an orderly narrative, a historical work, at least as he understands it in his day. He also says that he is going back to what has been handed down to us through the eyewitnesses and the ministers of the Word. He does not include himself in either of these two groups, indicating that he himself is not a witness to the events he is recording. His gospel has been written for an individual, Theophilus, and therefore it is not meant to be used as the Christian community gathers for prayer or to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Its purpose is to reassure Theophilus that what has been taught about Jesus is accurate and reliable.

After this introduction, the text for this Sunday moves to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in his hometown synagogue of Nazareth. It skips over the material that the Church used during the Christmas season, and it skips another text that will be used later in the liturgical year. This gospel text ends with Jesus' bold proclamation that today in Nazareth, in this synagogue, this passage from Isaiah is being fulfilled.

The passage that Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah focuses on God's proclamation of blessing to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Luke's gospel will portray a Jesus who was present to those in his society who were forgotten and overlooked by the religious leaders of his day. Throughout Luke's gospel there is a sense that Jesus is acting under the power of the Spirit of God. That is evident and stated specifically in this text as well.

Reflection Questions:

1. When you think of Luke being a person never having known Jesus, trying to compile an orderly account of the life of Jesus...
2. If Luke would not have put forth the effort to write his gospel...
3. Imagine that you are among those gathered that day in Jesus' hometown synagogue. What is going through your mind as the men gather and motion to Jesus to stand and read?
4. Jesus deliberately found and read a portion of the book of the prophet Isaiah that says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor..." What goes through you as you hear Jesus read this passage from Isaiah?
5. How is this passage from Isaiah being fulfilled in your own hearing?
6. In what ways does it still need to be fulfilled?
7. Can you talk with God now about what Jesus did that day in his hometown synagogue, or about the significance of what he did for you, or about anything else that arose within you as you read this gospel?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. The homepage is <https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>. The third link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for January 27, 2019, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, and they listened attentively to the book of the law. He opened the scroll so that the people might see it; and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and the people, their hands raised high, answered, "Amen, amen!" Then they bowed down before the Lord. Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand. Then Nehemiah and Ezra the priest-scribe and the Levites said: "Today is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep"—for the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. He said further: "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our Lord. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength!"

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
His decree is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. His precepts are right, rejoicing the heart;
The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;
The ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just. Let my words and thoughts find favor before you.

Brothers and sisters: As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts are one body, so also Christ. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. The body is not a single part. God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. Indeed, the parts that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, the parts that are less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

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of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:
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He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.
He handed the scroll back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue
looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Excerpts from Nehemiah 8:2-10; Psalm 19:8-10, 15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; and Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21